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A KING'S DAUGHTER

A TRAGEDY IN VERSE

By

John Masefield

King Cole
Gallipoli
Right Royal
The Faithful
Selected Poems
Lost Endeavor
Captain Margaret
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The Locked Chest; and The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight
The Everlasting Mercy, and the Widow in the Bye Street

A KING'S DAUGHTER

A TRAGEDY IN VERSE

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

New York

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This play was performed at The Oxford Playhouse, on Friday and Saturday, May 25th and 26th, 1923, by the following cast of the Hill Players:

JEZEBEL, Queen of Samaria.....*Penelope Wheeler*

ROSE-FLOWER, First Chorus.....*Judith Masefield*

MOON-BLOSSOM, Second Chorus.....*Jean Downs*

HAMUTAL, The Steward's Wife.....*Paulise De Bush*

A PROPHET / JEHU } Captain of the Horse { .....*Basil Maine* / .....*Ronald Hay*

MICAIAH, A Seer .....*George G. Edwards*

AHAB, King of Samaria.....*Leslie Davey*

PHARMAS / ASHOBAL } Court Attendants { .....*Wilfred Messenger* / .....*Henry Chapin*

NABOTH, A Farmer.....*Dudley Barlow*

AHAZIAH, Crown Prince of Samaria.....*W. E. May*

JORAM, His Younger Brother.....*Wilfred Howe-Nurse*

ZAKKUR, Jehu's Messenger.....*H. G. Wakeford*

PASHUR, The Bringer of the News.....*C. E. J. Vincent*

ZIKRI / KALLAI } Spearmen { .....*F. J. Saunders* / .....*Bernard Griffiths*

SCENE: The Palace in Samaria

A KING'S DAUGHTER

FIRST ACT

A KING'S DAUGHTER

FIRST ACT

Jezebel

I am Queen Jezebel, King Ahab's wife.
I was princess in Sidon long ago,
But in an evil day I became Queen
Over these strangers in Samaria.

Here, for these last ten months, we fought the Syrians,
Till hope was gone; then, suddenly, all changed;
The Syrian army fell into our hands.

King Ahab had two choices: one, to kill
All of the Syrians; one, to let them go.
He made a peace with them and let them go.

Now all the people of this city rage
At Ahab, for his peace, and cry aloud
That I, the foreign queen with foreign gods,
Made Ahab make the peace to please my friends.

Four days ago, King Ahab sought to buy
A vineyard, from one Naboth, who refused
To sell the vineyard, even to his King.

To-day the rebels of the town prepare
A feast to Naboth for refusing him,
And at the feast the prophets and seditious
Will urge our murder as a godly deed.

What is King Ahab doing to defeat them?
Nothing. For these three days he has been hidden,
Brooding upon his bed in bitterness;
Refusing food and drink; refusing speech
With me, his wife; neglecting court and state;
Letting rebellion grow, and seeing no man
Except our younger son, evil Prince Joram,
Who longs for war against the Syrians.

So I, the Queen, not knowing what may come
When the King sickens and the people rage,
Have sent for help, called home our eldest son,
Prince Ahaziah, from his frontier post
With all his horsemen. He should soon be here.

With Ahaziah and his horsemen here,
We shall be safer from our enemies,

The Teshbon prophet and the soldier Jehu,
The captain of the horse under the King.

* * *

Those are the enemies whom most I dread,
Lord Jehu and the Prophet, hand and mouth
To violence and unwise ways of life,
Violent and brainless both, as lightning is.

When violence and madness are in league,
Destruction comes.

And they are coming now,
Here to the palace of the King and Queen,
To plot their evil with our followers.

I will go hence, to pray that Ahaziah
May come in time to thwart their wickedness.

(EXIT)

(*Enter the* PROPHET)

PROPHET

Lord Jehu!

(*Enter* JEHU)

JEHU

Ha, my Prophet!

PROPHET

Is all well?

JEHU

Yes. All goes well. This King, this imbecile,
This Ahab, still is sulking like a child,
Speaking with no one, making all things easy
For us, my Prophet, who will now succeed.
Nothing can stop us now. All works for us.
Ahab is hated; Jezebel detested;
The army sickened at their loss of plunder,
All hot against them both. Our only danger
Their son, Prince Ahaziah, far away,
Their other son, Prince Joram, working for us.
And now this feast to Naboth as a crown
To all these helps, an opportunity.

PROPHET

Truly our work is godly, since it prospers.
Since all is thriving, it is surely time
That we set forth together to this feast.

JEHU

Wait, yet, my Prophet, while I ask you this:
What objects will be served by this our feast?

PROPHET

Why, it will honour Naboth for resisting
The tyrant whom we hate, and give our friends

A chance to come together with Prince Joram
To cry aloud for war with Syria.

JEHU

True Prophet; "honour Naboth; cry for war;"
Such were our objects when we planned the feast:
That was the plan, but, friend, it is not now.
No, Prophet, no; for I have changed my mind.
This feast to Naboth which we have prepared
Must be the prelude to a mightier deed.
Prophet, I know thy zeal for true religion,
And you know mine; now, therefore, stand by me.
I am determined to be King this day.
The chances are all for me, and the feast
Puts them within my hand for me to take.
Now, therefore, Prophet, when you see me there,
Sitting at feast among the men-of-war,
Send out some youngling of the Prophet tribe
There to anoint me King in Ahab's stead.
Then I will rise and lead those men-at-arms
To end this Ahab and his Jezebel,
And stamp them with our horses' feet, and bring
A true religion back: by God, we need it.

No. Doubt not the success. Anoint me King,
The men will follow. For, by God, now, Prophet,
Look at my eyes, I mean this to succeed.
This is the way, because all other ways,
The way we planned before and any way,
Must end in this; so send the stripling to me.
Make me the King.

PROPHET

Truly a spirit speaks within you, Jehu.
Truly the devilries of Jezebel
Have brimmed the cup, and Ahab's treachery
Has spilled it over. You shall be the King.
Here with my blood, I do anoint you King.
My young man shall anoint you with the oil,
But will the captains follow you as King?

JEHU

They'll follow; some for plunder, some for fear.
Now let us to this Naboth's feast, to raise
Our following against this doting King.

PROPHET

Here is our friend Ashóbal with some news.

(*Enter* ASHOBAL)

ASHÓBAL

I was afraid that you had gone, Lord Jehu.
Prophet, Lord Jehu, there is danger here.
I have just heard from Jezebel's own lips
That she has ordered Ahaziah hither
With all his horse, and that he will be here
Within two hours.

PROPHET

Gods!

JEHU

Did Jezebel
Tell you of this?

ASHOBAL

No; I was hidden, and
I overheard her as she told her women.

PROPHET

She sent for them?

ASHOBAL

She said so.

PROPHET

But for what?
To be a bodyguard?

ASHOBAL

She did not say,
But that is what they will be when they come.

PROPHET

Then she suspects us.

ASHOBAL

Probably.

JEHU

The hag!

PROPHET

These women of false gods shall die the death.

JEHU

Yes, unless we die first. Thank you, Ashóbal,
You bring the message in the nick of time.
Why has she sent for them? Is Ahab dying?
No; he is ill, not dying. By the gods,
The harlot may be plotting against Ahab
To crown her son?
No, by the gods, put by these pleasant dreams,
The likelier thing will be the explanation.
One of the little sheep within our fold

Has bleated to the shepherd: we have been
Betrayed, my Prophet and my sweet Ashobal,
Betrayed. . . . By whom?
By all the gods, this harlot is a man.
She hears of us, at once decides to strike,
Sends for the cavalry to cut our throats,
Calls Ahaziah to be King until
Her Ahab be a man again, and so
Bids for her husband's crown. There are the facts.

ASHOBAL

Even so I judged it, from the way she spoke.

PROPHET

Then we had better scatter into hiding,
For we are lost.

JEHU

True, brother Prophet, all our heads are loose,
But yet not lost.

PROPHET

But what are we to do?

JEHU

Stop Ahaziah in his coming here.
It can be done if he be two hours hence.

He must be coming by the desert road
Passing by Springs. Well, he shall meet his match.
Go, Prophet, to the feasting, as we planned.
Praise Naboth and be bitterer than spurge
About this peace. Pharmas must know of this.
Find Pharmas, that the Prophet speak with him.
Then tell what friends you can. Remember, Prophet,
Hold to our former plans till I return.
Now I must go.

(*Exit* JEHU)

PROPHET

And we had better go
Straight into hiding, while we have the time.

ASHOBAL

No, we must keep to what is planned and do
What Jehu tells us.

PROPHET

I must see Pharmas, then; find Pharmas for me.

ASHOBAL

I cannot yet.
Pharmas is in attendance on the Queen.

PROPHET

Why should he be with her, to-day of all days?
He is the King's attendant, not the Queen's.

ASHOBAL

True, but the Queen commanded him this morning
To write at her dictation; he will be
There, until noon; but it is nearly noon.

PROPHET

We are discovered by this Jezebel,
And Pharmas has betrayed us.

ASHOBAL

No, he is faithful to us. Five years since
This Jezebel once chided him in public
For breaking of a cup. He has remembered.
He swore to be revenged and means to be.
Now I say this: Come on the stroke of noon,
Here, to have speech with Pharmas and myself.
We may have news by then. If the worst happen,
We shall have time enough for flight at noon.

PROPHET

You may be right; pray Heaven that you be.

ASHOBAL

Hark! there is someone coming through the court.
By heaven!

PROPHET

Why, who is it? What has happened?

ASHOBAL

It is the King, recovered from his brooding
And dressed as for an audience with his peers.
If Ahab be in health again, why, death——

PROPHET

What shall we do? Oh, say!

ASHOBAL

Be not found here.
He's coming hither with his man, Micaiah.
Go quickly, quickly.

(*Exit* PROPHET)

(*Enter* MICAIAH)

MICAIAH

Way for their Majesties! It is commanded
That all avoid. Way for their Majesties!
Avoid the room, Ashobal, for the King.

(*Exit* ASHOBAL)

(*Enter* AHAB)

AHAB

Micaiah, put my staff into my hands.
Go, now, desire the Queen to give me audience.

(*Exit* MICAIAH)

Thus does the climber on a pinnacle.
He stands exhausted on the peak and feels
Nothing beneath him but the mist of cloud
Hiding the precipice. I have my foothold;
Around me, the sheer fall into the pit.

(*Enter* JEZEBEL)

JEZEBEL

So, my good lord, at last I look upon you
After these days of anguish. O my lord,
What has afflicted you, that you should shut
Your doors upon me, send no word to me,

No word till now, not even let me know
If you were ill or well.
But no upbraiding.
Tell me what is the trouble of your soul.

AHAB

What do you think?

JEZEBEL

I know not what to think,
Living alone, shut from you, that should tell me.
Men say that you are grieved because a farmer,
One Naboth, would not sell his vineyard to you.

AHAB

I, grieved, at that?

JEZEBEL

I have no guide save rumour.

AHAB

His vineyard? Why, I did not want the vineyard.

JEZEBEL

Not want it, lord?

AHAB

Why should I want it; think?

JEZEBEL

I cannot think, indeed, why you should want it.

AHAB

Jehu was wanting it, to bring it in
Within the city wall, for in the siege
The Syrian archers shot our people from it.
Jehu demanded it.

JEZEBEL

Jehu? Not you?
Yet do you know that men are cursing you
For wanting Naboth's land; and feasting Naboth
To-day, in public, for refusing you?
And that our crowns and even our lives are threatened?

AHAB

No, Queen, I do not know and cannot care.
What is the raging of the fools to me
Who ponder day and night upon a question,
A question that goes down into the bone
And burns like fire, till I cannot sleep
Or eat or work, for it is always here.

No, do not look like that, I am not mad,
Not yet; I am not mad. But always night and day
This question is about me and within me,
Haunting and harsh: the question, "Am I wrong?
Are these, my people who oppose my will,
Right, after all, righter than I, the King?
Righter throughout my twenty years of kingship?"

JEZEBEL

How can these preys to every passionate flaw
Be righter than an upright mind and conscience?

AHAB

I cannot tell, and yet I think they are.

JEZEBEL

You know they are not.

AHAB

No, I do not know.
I wonder, if the blunt and bawdy world
Be not the worse for wisdom, not the better.

JEZEBEL

It is a sin and cowardice to say so.

AHAB

Is it, my Queen? I wonder if it be.
Here have I striven twenty years, for peace
With Syria, and for liberty of thought
Within our borders, yet with what results?
Almost continual war with Syria,
Almost a civil war within this land.
Such being the fruits, I think the seeds were wrong.

JEZEBEL

The seeds were right, and if the fruit has failed,
Blame the bad soil, the bitter weather, drought,
Evil of many men hacking the plant,
All things, but you who planted, and the seed.

AHAB

Even if the seed were right, the ground was wrong.
And then I sowed it out of season, lady.
I could have smitten Syria to the dust,
Yet granted terms. I risked a civil war
To grant the terms. They do not keep the terms.
And these my people prefer blood to quiet.

And now I doubt the usefulness of wisdom,
Doubt my whole life; and wonder, if the prophets,
The people, and the bloody ways they love,
Be not indeed God's ways for governing.
If these things be, then I have failed my country.

JEZEBEL

O King, you cannot say that things are wrong
Because they fail. All good things seem to fail;
The road that men make is not straight nor smooth,
Nor like the perfect roadway that they planned;
And yet among the thorns and broken flint,
And twistings where the adder lies in wait,
It is a path where no path was before.
So with your Syrian pact and with these people,
You have hewed out a way where men will tread.
Be comforted and proud, for you have done it,
As the lone artist makes the perfect thing,
With every blind malignant saying "No!"
You have made peace as generous as yourself

And thought as free. So let the madman rave
And let the savage shriek for blood, and let
The blind worm of the many-creeping world
Crawl its obstruction, you have conquered them.

AHAB

It is not true. I have not conquered them.
They conquer me. I am defeated. Yes,
I cannot think, or master, or decide,
Having no longer any faith remaining
In what we planned together and have done.
The ground is gone from under me, the light
Is gone from in me, and the sky above
Is black with punishment that threatens me.
These ruffian prophets have been proven right,
Our policies have been accurséd; ay,
And the reward is death.

JEZEBEL

O husband, stay!

AHAB

I will not stay. The penalty is death,
With hell to follow, as the blind man's payment
Fully deserved.

(*Exit* AHAB)

JEZEBEL

Gods save us, he is mad, or over-wrought
Up to the point of madness; now, indeed,
We have been conquered, for we have no King,
Save one distraught with trouble. How am I
To help in this?

So ends my queenship with him. It is well
That I have called Prince Ahaziah home.
But, till he come, I govern, I am King,
And one act of a King must now be done:
This rebels' feast to Naboth must be stopped.

(*She claps her hands for* MICAIAH, *who enters*)

Micaiah, is there dust upon the road
To show the Prince's coming?

MICAIAH

Not yet, Madam.

JEZEBEL

How soon can he be here?

MICAIAH

Within two hours,
Unless he halt for noontide by the Springs.
He might be here much sooner. Say, one hour.

JEZEBEL

Who is the captain of the guard to-day?

MICAIAH

Rechab, to-day, good lady.

JEZEBEL

Go, Micaiah,
Tell Pharmas that I wait him in the throne-room;
Bid him bring ink and seals; bid him be quick
Attend me there.

MICAIAH

Madam, I go.

(*Exit* MICAIAH)

JEZEBEL

Though the King sicken, it shall still be seen
That I, the Syrian woman, am a queen.

(*Exit* JEZEBEL)

(*Enter* PROPHET)

PROPHET

Pharmas! Ashobal! Hark! Is Pharmas there?
It is full noon, but Pharmas is not here.

No, nor Ashobal. But there seems to be
Less danger than I feared: I was not questioned,
And men go unmolested to the feast.

(*Enter* ASHOBAL)

Here is Ashobal. Where is Pharmas, friend?

ASHOBAL

Gone to the Queen again, with ink and seals.
There is this news: the King and Queen have talked
And Ahab now is in his room again,
Moodily sharpening his sword, and muttering.
I myself think that Ahab has gone mad.

PROPHET

No word from Jehu yet, of Ahaziah?

ASHOBAL

None yet, nor will be for a while.

PROPHET

King Jehu,
Jehu, the King, God's comet, bringing change.
Come soon, come soon. O what is Pharmas doing?

ASHOBAL

He writes some pressing matter for the Queen.

PROPHET

We shall be late. Come, Pharmas! Hurry, hurry!
Would he were here and we away from this.
We are like hunters in the lion's den,
Knowing the lion to be near.

ASHOBAL

I hear him.
Yes; this is Pharmas coming. Here he is.

(*Enter* PHARMAS)

PROPHET

Pharmas, we have been waiting for you; come.
We must be going. Listen to your orders.
During this feast go down among the guards. . . .

PHARMAS

Do not you talk of feasting, nor of guards.
The Queen has sent Micaiah with the guards
To fetch poor Naboth here.

ASHOBAL

Why?

PROPHET

What to do?

PHARMAS

I do not know; but not for any good.
"Fetch Naboth here before me," was the order.
It has gone off by this.

ASHOBAL

This is the end!

PROPHET

What can she want with Naboth? Painted hag,
Thus to command a man.

ASHOBAL

Was the guard ordered to suppress the feast?

PHARMAS

No, but it is suppressed with Naboth taken.

ASHOBAL

We shall be taken next, so save yourself.

PROPHET

I will be gone. You know my hiding-place,
The old one, near the wall; send word to me
There, if you have a message.

(*Exit*)

MICAIAH

Way for Her Majesty the Queen, make way!

(*Enter* MICAIAH)

Set forth the chair of audience for the Queen.
Be reverent; the Queen approaches. Hail!

(*Enter* JEZEBEL)

JEZEBEL

Micaiah, Pharmas and Ashobal, stay.
Within few moments, when the guards return,
You will return to take your places here,
Even as you stand this minute.

THE MEN

We will do so.

JEZEBEL

All three of you; you understand?

THE MEN

Yes, Madam.

JEZEBEL

Dismiss then, till the guards appear.

(*The* MEN *go*)

I am the King, upon whose balance lies
The nation's need to prompt me to be wise.
Ruin to all I cherish, if I fail.
God, judge for me, thy wisdom turn the scale.

CURTAIN

Rose-Flower

Once long ago young Nireus was the King
  In Symé Island, so the stories say,
  And at his birth the gods made holiday
And blessed the child and gave him each one thing.

Courage, and skill, and beauty, and bright eyes,
  Wisdom, and charm, and many another power,
  So that he grew to manhood like a flower
For beauty, and like God for being wise.

Now Nireus' friend was Paris, out of Troy,
  Paris, the prince, the archer, who had seen
  The goddesses within the forest green;
King Priam's son, a peacock of a boy.

Moon-Blossom

At Sparta's court, not far from Symé Isle,
  Bright Helen lived, King Menelaus' Queen,
  The loveliest woman that has ever been,
Who made all mortals love her by her smile.

Nireus and Paris went together there
To Helen's palace; and when Nireus saw
Helen the queen, the lovely without flaw,
He loved her like her shadow everywhere.

And Paris, when he saw her with her mate,
Helen, the rose, beside that withered weed,
Loved her no less, but with a young man's greed,
That wants the moon from heaven and cannot wait.

ROSE-FLOWER

Straightway he wooed Queen Helen to be his,
And won her love, and cried to Nireus then,
"O Nireus, help to save us from this den,
Lend us your ship to bring us out of this."

So Nireus, though his heart was torn with pain,
Well knowing what would come, yet took the pair
To many-towered Troy and left them there,
To live in love and be the city's bane.

MOON-BLOSSOM

When Menelaus knew of Helen's flight,
He led all Greece in arms to punish Troy,

Nireus went with him in the fleet, and joy
Ceased in the world, for all men went to fight.

Nine years they fought there in the tamarisk field,
And in the tenth, in some blind midnight stour,
Nireus killed Paris underneath the tower.
Men bore him back to Helen on his shield.

ROSE-FLOWER

Then Troy was sacked and Menelaus took
Beautiful Helen as his prisoner home,
And locked her in his castle as a gnome
Might lock a gem on which no man might look.

TOGETHER

Thus Nireus lost his love, and killed his friend,
And knew despair; so going to his ship,
He sailed to where the constellations dip,
In the great west, to look for the world's end.

ROSE-FLOWER

When Troy was sacked and all her towers
Blazed up and shook into the sky,
Smoke like great trees and flame like flowers,
And Priam's bodyguard did die.

Then the Queen's women snatched up spears
And fought their way out of the gate,
Seized horses from the charioteers
And fled like mountain-streams in spate.

They would not stay for slavery
To some Greek lord until they died,
They rode the forest to be free
Up on the peaks of snowy Ide.

MOON-BLOSSOM

And in the forest on a peak
They hewed a dwelling with the bronze,
And lived, unconquered by the Greek,
Fierce, sun-burned women, neither tame nor weak,
The panther-women called the Amazons.

They lived there on the heights and knew no men.
Having beheld the lusts of men destroy
The town of windy Troy,
They killed all men they met; their only joy
Was hunting for the wild beasts in the glen.

TOGETHER

The wild-boar and the many-branching stag,
Horse-killing panthers hidden by the brook,

The spotted death among the yellow flag,
All these with their bright spears these women took.
All these, and men, for even to be seen
By men, these hunter women thought unclean.

So no man saw them save a glimpse afar
Of panther-skins flung back, and swift feet flying,
And the red stag brought low to the fierce Ha!
Of women's spear-thrusts driven in the dying.
They ruled the crags like wolves, they kept their pride
Savage and sovereign like the snow on Ide.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

SECOND ACT

SECOND ACT

MICAIAH

Madam, the soldiers have brought the farmer, Naboth; they have him in the guard-room, waiting for your orders.

JEZEBEL

Were you set upon as you brought him through the city?

MICAIAH

No, Madam, but a crowd followed, which is now at the palace gates.

JEZEBEL

Is it threatening?

MICAIAH

No, Madam, but uneasy.

JEZEBEL

Thank you, Micaiah. What standing has this Naboth?

MICAIAH

He lives in the city, but has this vineyard and some other ground, outside the walls. He is a small farmer, strict in religion. Nothing but religion will move him.

JEZEBEL

I will try whether that be true. Go now, without, and bring me Ashobal and Pharmas.

MICAIAH

I will, Madam.

(*Exit*)

JEZEBEL

If I can persuade this man to sell his land, then this gathering will lose all purpose. If he will not sell, as I doubt he will not, then, how then?

(MICAIAH, PHARMAS, ASHOBAL *enter*)

Stand where you are and pay especial heed
To what is said by us.

THE MEN

We will, great Queen.

JEZEBEL

I thank you. Will you bring the man,
Micaiah.

(*Enter* MICAIAH, *with* NABOTH, *crowned as for a feast*)

MICAIAH

Madam, your servant waits for your commands.

JEZEBEL

Thank you, Micaiah. Keep in presence here.
You are that Naboth of the South-west Precinct?

(NABOTH *nods*)

Our calling of you here may come untimely.
You are at feast, or going to a feast?

NABOTH

I'm here; you've caught me; do the worst you can,
But do not mock me.

JEZEBEL

I mock no one, Naboth.
I sent for you because I wished to speak
About the purchase of your vineyard near
The city wall.

NABOTH

Why do you want my vineyard, tell me that?

JEZEBEL

I do not want it.

NABOTH

Well, your husband does.

JEZEBEL

He does not, Naboth. Listen, all of you.
There is a false suspicion spread abroad
That we, the King and Queen, have coveted
This land of Naboth's. It is wholly false.
We do not want it, never wanted it,
But bid for it, on public grounds, because
Lord Jehu, captain of the bodyguard,
The overseer of the town's defences,
Urged, and still urges, that the vineyard be
Brought in, within the city wall. As King,
The King made offer for the land, through one. . . .
Which of you was it?

ASHOBAL

I made the offer for His Majesty,
So please you, Madam.

JEZEBEL

Since it is not your rulers but your city
That needs the land, we ask you to consider
The giving up your holding to be walled.

NABOTH

God pleased to put my vineyard where it is.
Why should you change it?

MICAIAH

In the siege, good Naboth,
The Syrian archers used to shoot from it
Into the city.

NABOTH

And they might again
Soon, in another siege?

JEZEBEL

So Jehu thought.

NABOTH

If you idolaters had done God's will
And killed these Syrians when God bade you kill,
You would have had no other siege to dread.

ASHOBAL

You must not speak this evil of your rulers.
Say nothing but as touching on the treaty.

JEZEBEL

Whether your land should be enclosed or no
I cannot tell: Duke Jehu says it should be;
Says that for public good it should be walled.
You would not sorrow that your land should go
For greater safety of your fellow townsmen?

NABOTH

I would.

JEZEBEL

I do not think you would, good sir.
Yet, if a war should follow and a siege
Threaten again, your vineyard would be taken
Maugre your will, and walled in spite of you
By public means; and you would lose it, so.

NABOTH

I would not lose it. It would still be mine.

JEZEBEL

I cannot well see how; but let that be.
I ask you now to be content to treat
For this your plot. May we proceed in this?

NABOTH

Dismiss your gang of killers here, these three
Lying in wait upon a poor man's words.

JEZEBEL

These are no killers, but my palace servants.
We are in treaty for exchange of land,
Or hope to be, and civil law prescribes
That sales of land be bargained before witness.

NABOTH

Where are my witnesses, to speak for me?

JEZEBEL

Well thought of, Naboth. Will you therefore send
To three, your friends, to witness to your words?

NABOTH

No, I will not.

JEZEBEL

Why not?

NABOTH

No matter why.
You have caught me, but catch my friends yourself
If you do want them.

JEZEBEL

Will you choose three men
Here in the palace, then, as witnesses?

NABOTH

I have a witness, stronger than your three,
Already present, woman of false gods.

ASHOBAL

Do not misname the person of your Queen.
You will lose all by rudeness. You have heard
That our great Queen demands to bargain with you,
But means no harm to you, nor to your friends.

JEZEBEL

Thank you, Ashobal. (*Then to* NABOTH)
May we now proceed?

NABOTH

I have not yet agreed to treat with you.

JEZEBEL

You waste our time. Speak. Will you treat
or not?

NABOTH

Before I treat, what do you offer for it?

JEZEBEL

What is its yearly value?

ASHOBAL

Seven casks.

MICAIAH

Madam, that may have been the yearly yield
In its best seasons, but it is not now.
It is no vineyard now, great Queen; the vines
Were routed up by Syrians in the siege.

JEZEBEL

So? Did you know of this, Ashobal?

ASHOBAL

No.

JEZEBEL

Not know of it?

ASHOBAL

Not when I bargained for it.

JEZEBEL

Yet knew it now, and never mentioned it?
Would let me bargain for a vineless vineyard
As though it gave full vintage.

ASHOBAL

O good Madam,
You asked its yearly value, not its worth.

JEZEBEL

That shall be proved. Naboth, I did not know
That this your vineyard had been routed up.

NABOTH

That damned idolater, your husband, knew it.
He said that as it was not now a vineyard,
He could plant herbs there.

JEZEBEL

Bridle you your tongue.
When did His Majesty the King say this?
To whom?

NABOTH

It is well known he said it openly.

JEZEBEL

To you?

NABOTH

No.

JEZEBEL

Then to whom? To one of these?
You are all silent. Yet the King has seen
No other man, since his return to Shemer,
Except Prince Joram; therefore what you say
Is false in fact, seditious being said.
Ashobal, what was offered for the vineyard?

ASHOBAL

A better vineyard; then, that being refused,
Three vineyards, each one better, in full bearing,
Two of red grapes and one of white, O Queen.

JEZEBEL

And he refused?

MICAIAH

He did.

JEZEBEL (*To* NABOTH)

And do you still?

NABOTH

Yes.

JEZEBEL

Why?

NABOTH

Because the vineyards that he offered
Aren't his to offer.

JEZEBEL

But they are, good Naboth.
They are the King's.

NABOTH

Does the King work them, then?

JEZEBEL

Yes, they are worked at his command. How else?

NABOTH

His sweat does not fall on them.

JEZEBEL

It has done so.
He with his own hands worked those vineyards, Naboth,

Before his father, Omri, became King,
As you well know.

NABOTH

I'll have no slave-tilled vineyard.

JEZEBEL

Men cannot live without the work of others;
You yourself do not. Did you make that robe,
Those shoes, that pouch? But we are wandering.
Let me, the Queen, make offer for your vineyard.
I offer the King's vineyards as before
And with them, the three marrowy olive-groves
Which Shemer planted.

NABOTH

Shemer! And what more?

MICAIAH

What more?

ASHOBAL

Good heaven, you surely ask no more?

NABOTH

I do. It's not enough.

JEZEBEL

Then name your price.

NABOTH

I cannot be buyer and seller both.

JEZEBEL

Then I will offer these: a bale of scarlet,
A camel-load of wool, woven or raw,
Three tent-rugs such as desert tribesmen weave,
Three desert-cushions made of coloured leather,
And one sealed roll of linen from the Nile,
The deckings of a house, in fact. With these,
Something to gladden dwellers in the house,
A score of honey, and a man-sized jar
Of olive oil, a measure of fine flour,
A pack of dates and seven porters' loads
Of matured wine; the feastings of a house.
With these, I offer treasures for your house:
Gums from Arabia to burn as perfumes,
A tusk of ivory two cubits long,
A bar of silver from the mines of Bakht,
A casket made of turkis filled with beryl,
A piece of gold, the size of a man's hand.

NABOTH

I want no ivory nor gold nor scarlet,
Nor silver bars nor trash nor vanity.

MICAIAH

Good Madam, might it not be wise to offer
Stock for his farm?

JEZEBEL

Take horses, then, or oxen
To till your holding.

NABOTH

I will not take them, then.

MICAIAH

Would you not like them?

NABOTH

No; I do without;
I need nor horse nor ass, nor cow nor camel.

JEZEBEL

What can I offer?

NABOTH

Sacrifice to the God of Israel.

JEZEBEL

I do not offer that.

NABOTH

You are not one
To search unto the spirit, nor be single
Within your heart. You are possessed by things;
Dead things, with stink and colour, brought in ships;
Your purples and the jewels for your hair,
Your ivory room, God save us! you being mortal,
Dwelling in ivory, while God himself
Lives in the wooden room darkened by wings.

MICAIAH

Yes, Naboth; but reserve this for the feast,
Where those who hear it will enjoy it more
Than we do here.

NABOTH

I do not speak to you.

JEZEBEL

No, Naboth, you are speaking to your Queen,
Who bids you to be silent, if you care
To keep whole bones. Come from him, then, Micaiah.
Hear a last offer, Naboth: you are old,
Soon to become infirm, soon to bear pain,

And find it weariness to cross the room.
Might I not set provision for old age
Against your vineyard? Might I settle on you
A pension that would bring you quietness
And what age loves, respect and ease and state?
Might we not give you rank, as Elder, say,
With pay and servants fitting to the rank?
These things to be assured to you for life,
And after, to your son?

NABOTH

I have no son.
My son was killed while fighting for King Ahab
In this last war. I will not sell my vineyard
For all the rank, for all the slaves and ease
In this realm that you make the gate of Hell.
God blot me from the record of the blest
If I give up my fathers' heritage,
If I commit into polluted hands,
Red with the blood of offerings to false gods,
The earth my father worked and worshipped in.
It is my vineyard and it shall be mine,
By God's red hand the King should be ashamed;
You too would be ashamed were you not shameless,

To tempt a poor man's soul with merchandise;
You, smeared with spice, painted, and dripping perfume,
A shameless woman, chaffering with a man,
And he, the King, a dallier with God's foes,
Conspiring thus to cheat me of my vineyard.
God puts a word into my mouth to say,
He makes my mouth to spit upon you both.
There is for you. And there is for the King.
I spit upon you both and bid God curse you,
Curse you to ruin and to rottenness.
As here I curse you; him for making peace,
Where no peace is, and you, you insolent woman,
For being, like the King, a curse on Israel,
A bringer down into the pit of hell.

MICAIAH

You shall avoid the presence when you curse.

(*Exit with* NABOTH)

JEZEBEL

You heard the curses of this frantic man?

ASHOBAL *and* PHARMAS

Madam, we did. We longed to silence him.

JEZEBEL

Rechab is captain of the guard to-day?

PHARMAS

Yes, Madam.

ASHOBAL

Rechab, with the Jezreel troop,
Mounts guard till night.

JEZEBEL

That will be well, Ashobal.
You know the ivory room that the King made?
You know that it was never planned nor used
For anything, save as an inmost shrine
For worshipping of God?

PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL

We know it, Madam.

JEZEBEL

Here is Micaiah back. Has Naboth gone?

MICAIAH

Yes, Madam, to the rabble of his friends
Waiting his coming at the palace gate.

Now they are taking him triumphantly
Up to the feast, shouting, "He held his own
Against the royal tyrants." At the feast,
When they have drunken, they will speak worse evil.

JEZEBEL

You all remember what he uttered here?
How he misused the name of God, and cursed
The King and me?

MICAIAH, ASHOBAL *and* PHARMAS
(*Together*)

We do remember.

JEZEBEL

Wait, then, some minutes, till the feast be set,
Then summon up the chapter of the priests,
And Rechab with his troop of bodyguard.
Then march with priests and soldiers to the banquet.
Let the priests call for silence from the throng,
And in the silence do you three stand forth,
Bear witness against Naboth in these terms:
"Thou didst blaspheme God and the King!" repeat
The words he uttered, bear each other witness;

And if a further witness be required,
Say I, the Queen, will come to testify,
Who heard the words, yet spared the speaker
of them,
So that the priests, whose cause it is, might
judge.
Then call upon the priests to utter judgment
According to the laws of blasphemy.

MICAIAH, PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL

We will obey your orders instantly.

(*They go out*)

JEZEBEL

Which brings the greater woe; to pass an
evil,
Or break your Being's law to combat it?
The allotted sorrow ever has a gateway.

CURTAIN

Rose-Flower

Nireus sailed; and a strange wind blew him
to islands unseen before,
Where the gods sat throned on the crags
with peace on their marvellous faces,
Clouds and the smoke of fire, that glittered
and changed, they wore;
And unto them came the crying of all
man's sorrowful races.

Moon-Blossom

They cried to him as he passed, "You are
seeking and you shall find,
Not in the way you hope, not in the way
foreseen;
Out of horror of soul, ache, and anguish of
mind,
Out of the desert of all, shall come the leaf
that is green."

Rose-Flower

Then the wind blew on to an island where
millet is ever in ear,
And the horses that live in the sea come
thronging in thousands to eat,

And the horses that live on the island will never let them come near,
But they fight on the beaches forever with flashing and thunder of feet.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Then he sailed by invisible islands, he smelt the fruit on the trees,
And heard the noise in the shipyards and the crowing of cocks unseen,
Then sheered from the roar of breakers and on over unknown seas,
And ever he grieved for Paris, and thought of the beautiful Queen.

ROSE-FLOWER

Then he came to a sea of terror, where monsters rose from the sea,
Things with the beaks of birds and arms like the suckers of vines:
Things like ghosts in the water coming motionlessly
To tatter the flesh of men with teeth like the cactus-spines.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Over unending water ever he held his course,
Birds that were curses followed, crying around and above:

"Nireus, broken by beauty, broken again by remorse,
Goes to the breaking of death for killing his friend and love."

ROSE-FLOWER

And ever he cursed himself for bringing them both to wreck,
Helen and Paris, the lovely; and ever the waves seemed filled
With skull-bones hollow in death, that rose and peered on the deck:
And he thought, "They are those from Troy whom I in my madness killed.

MOON-BLOSSOM

"Had I refused, when they asked for my help to escape,
Paris would still be alive, Troy, the city, would stand,
And all the killed of the war would be tilling the corn and the grape,
Not ghosts with a curse in the air and torn bones strewing the land."

ROSE-FLOWER

So he sailed; but at night in the dark when the lantern bubbled aloft,
And men lay sleeping, when all save he were asleep,

And the ship slid on with a gurgle of water soft,
He knew that the dead of Troy came with him over the deep.

Moon-Blossom

Out of the long-backed roller that slid from its crest of foam,
Gibbered the bloodless dead, white faces with haggard eyes,
Pointing the bones of their hands at him who had forced them from home,
Their curses came to his ears like little twittering cries.

Together

Whenever he moored at an island for water or food or rest,
Soon those wraiths of the dead would rise and bid him begone,
To harry the resting gannet out of the roller's crest
And carry the curse of his soul to the unknown, on and on.

Moon-Blossom

In the grey of morning
When the stars were paling,

Nireus sailing,
Saw land ahead.
An island shining
With city towers,
Where bells were ringing
And men singing.

ROSE-FLOWER

As Nireus stepped ashore there
He stood staring,
For all men there
Were the dead of the war:
The Greeks and Trojans,
Beautiful and swift,
Killed in the trampled tamarisks
Beneath Troy town.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Stars were in their hair,
Their brows were crowned with violets,
They stepped like stags,
Comrade with comrade.
They had forgotten
The mud and death,
The heat and flies
Of the plain of Troy.

ROSE-FLOWER

There among them
Came a prince in scarlet,
With his hands stretched
In welcoming.
It was Paris, his friend,
Paris whom he killed
In the midnight raid
Beneath Troy wall.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Paris cried,
"Nireus, my comrade,
Nireus, my beloved,
My friend of old!
Here we have forgiven
What my young man's folly bred,
We feast as friends
In the violet fields."

ROSE-FLOWER

Then he led Nireus
To the hall of feasting.
There they feasted
In the violet fields.
Three summer days and nights,
It seemed, they feasted,
Each summer day and night
Was ten years long.

Together

Paris and the heroes
Cried to Nireus,
"We loved Helen,
When we were men.
Now we love her still
And we see her lonely,
Old, and haunted
By her lovers dead.

"Take to Helen
Gifts from her lovers,
In her old age find her
And give her these:
Beauty and peace
And our forgiveness,
And all our thanks
For what she was."

Moon-Blossom

As they ceased speaking
They faded from him,
The island faded,
Nireus was at sea.
He and his men
Were all grown old,
Thirty years
Had fallen on them.

Together

As old men failing
They came to Sparta;
All unavailing
Their coming was.
Helen was gone
And none knew whither,
To search for peace
Or to find release.

Over the seas
In lands and islands
Nireus sought her,
But could not find.
For the gods retire
When men desire,
Though it burn like fire
And make men blind.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

THIRD ACT

THIRD ACT

PROPHET

Come, you avenging Powers, who with swords
Smite at the bidding of your overlords;
Come, all you threatening things, who, with slant eyes,
Wait to snatch spirits in the mood unwise;
Come, eagle spirits, that do drink man's blood,
Hurry on smeared wings hither to your food:
I, who am Prophet, give you King and Queen.

(*Enter* ASHOBAL)

ASHOBAL

What are you raging for? Be silent, Prophet,
The King is coming hither.

PROPHET

Tell him this:
"I am the herald of a mightier King,
Who bids me stand before this palace door

And cry a curse on Ahab and his wife.
Ahab, the dog, Ahab, the murderer,
And Jezebel the harlot murderess."

(*Enter* AHAB)

AHAB

So! Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?

PROPHET

Yes, I have found thee, and before I lose thee
Will speak one word. What hast thou done,
thou devil,
On Naboth, that most upright man of God?

AHAB

An upright man is in God's hands, O
Prophet.

PROPHET

True, he is in God's hands. Who sent him
there?

AHAB

I know not, Prophet, but if he be there,
He will be much at peace.

PROPHET

You fiend of hell!
You, who have murdered Naboth, to exult
Over his corpse, still bleeding as it is.

AHAB

I have not murdered Naboth, nor do know
That he is dead, nor how, nor why. Explain.

PROPHET

You damned him to be stoned for blasphemy.

AHAB

I, do you say?

PROPHET

Yes, you; or if not you,
Your bloody-hearted hirelings and the priests.

AHAB

The priests alone can judge of blasphemy.
Which do you call my hirelings?

PROPHET

The accursed
Idolaters who follow on your Queen.

(*Enter* JEZEBEL)

JEZEBEL

I am the Queen. Where is the man who dares
Call those who follow me accurst?

PROPHET

Here, devil.
Here is the man who dare call you and them
Accurst as murderers of Naboth dead.

AHAB

You say that priests condemned him for blaspheming.

PROPHET

You stirred the priests to prosecuting him.

AHAB

No, not in any way soever, Prophet.

PROPHET

Then you, co-devil with him, did this thing.

JEZEBEL

Harken, old ruffian, and be warned by Naboth.

He cursed his God and King here in my presence,
Breaking the kingdom's laws of blasphemy.
I, who uphold this kingdom's laws, gave order
That he should be arraigned for blasphemy.
Do I conclude that there are still some men
Who do their ruler's bidding in this kingdom?

AHAB

He was arraigned, condemned and stoned?

PROPHET

He was.

JEZEBEL

So perish all such breakers of the law.

PROPHET

Easily spoken words for King and Queen;
And easy laws for King and Queen to keep,
Living in purple in the ivory room;
And useful laws for killing enemies.
But there are other laws which do persist
After the enemies are killed. For Naboth
We left his body lying on its face,
And the wild dogs slink in and lick his blood;

And the bald birds that watch in heaven for deaths,
Settle, and wait until the dogs have done.
But . . . as those dogs and buzzards come to Naboth,
The dogs and kites of vengeance come to you.
I tell you this . . .
Since you have sold yourself thus to work evil,
I will bring evil on you, take away
All your posterity, and make your house
Like Jeroboam's house,
And like the accursed house, Baasha's house.
Those of your house that die within the city
The dogs shall eat, and those that die afield
The fowls of the air shall eat; and Jezebel . . .
Dogs shall eat Jezebel by the city wall.
Now royal rottenness in purple hedged,
I call a great cry from the Spirit of God.
Come all you dogs and vultures.
Come on your noiseless wings out of great Heaven,
Come upon padding footsteps stealthily.
Follow your victims in the hearts of men,
And by the ways of men, and take their blood
As they took his, as they took his, as they
Took his, upon the stones; blood, blood, that shrieks.

(*The spirit passes out of him. He swoons.*)

AHAB

So, Jezebel, you see what you have done.

JEZEBEL

Would you have pardoned Naboth, had you
heard him?

AHAB

No; but to give our enemies this handle
Against us, at this time, and for no reason.

JEZEBEL

The laws are plain: would you have par-
doned him?

AHAB

I tell you, no.

JEZEBEL

Then what would you have done?

AHAB

Made him a mocking, or imprisoned him,
Or had him publicly displayed and shamed.

JEZEBEL

Why did you not then do as you have said?
I told you plainly of the need of action.
One of us rulers had to play the King
And check this rebel. Since you did not, I did.
And he is checked forever, and his friends
Daunted: so daunted that you have the chance
Now, to take hold and be indeed the King
And rule according to your royal will,
Not as the frenzy of a rebel bids.

AHAB

This thing that you have done has ruined all
The little chance I had of governing.
You bring me to the pitch of having to choose
Between your fancies and the people's will.
Perhaps it is too late to remedy
The evil that must follow from your folly.
Naboth is dead: this prophet shows our future;
If there be any future left for us.
Do not now answer me; I must debate this
Within myself. You may have ruined me,
But that or no, you have been mad, by Heaven.

(*Exit* AHAB)

JEZEBEL

How blest to be a prophet, who forever
Does but condemn another man's endeavour.
How blest, not to decide, nor be, nor do,
But help the many to condemn the few.

(*Enter* JORAM)

Joram, my son, do you come to comfort your mother?

JORAM

No, mother, I do not. I come to look for my father.

JEZEBEL

If you are looking for the King, this is the King.

JORAM

What is this body, Madam? The prophet? Is he dead?

JEZEBEL

Only swooned from cursing your father and mother.

JORAM

Mother, you are talking very strangely.

JEZEBEL

I have been mad, by Heaven. Why, Joram, you come to tell my father so; do you not, boy?

JORAM

I do not know how to answer you.

JEZEBEL

You reckon me a curse upon this country?

JORAM

As my father's officer I have to report what the citizens feel.

JEZEBEL

You feel it with them.

JORAM

Whatever I feel I can restrain; but since you insist, I say that it is hard that my father should be ruined by your Syrian policy and gods and self.

JEZEBEL

You are half Syrian.

JORAM

Through you, I was. But in this last war, while I lay wounded, a Syrian trooper kicked me and spurred me in the face. That took my last drop of Syrian blood; your blood. There is nothing Syrian in me now. But I mean to pay the Syrians for that kicking and spurring when they lie wounded. You have made father mild and Ahaziah like yourself; but after them perhaps I shall be King; perhaps sooner.

JEZEBEL

You are leagued with your father's enemies. And do you think that they will make you the King?

JORAM

It is not a question of what I think, but of the needs of this land.

JEZEBEL

When the mob comes to sack the palace, there is always some prince to open the door.

JORAM

If I ever am the King, the Syrians will see.

JEZEBEL

May it be long before you become King.

JORAM

Your killing Naboth may make it very long. But I am not here to talk with you, but with the King.

JEZEBEL

As I told you, this is the King, here on the ground.

(*Enter* AHAB)

JORAM

Save you, O King, I bring a message from the Council.

AHAB

What is it?

JORAM

Something that would be better said by Ahaziah than myself.

AHAB

Let me hear it.

JORAM

If I did not bring it as a message, it would be my duty as your officer to bring it as a report.

JEZEBEL

The Council sends word by your son that you, the King, should banish the Queen.

JORAM

Madam, do not add to the pain of my mission. The Council is composed of manly and godly men, the best of our country, whose wills are worth the weighing. They bid me say, sir, this, that they deplore that such a King should have for counsellor one who brings peace with Syria, and the death of an upright man whom they esteemed.

AHAB

By this counsellor they mean your mother, the Queen?

JORAM

Sir, you are ever wise and they ever respectful. They feel that a foreign influence is not for your people's good, nor for justice in your people's causes.

JEZEBEL

My son, speak openly, for the people's good.

AHAB

What do they demand?

JORAM

They bid me say, Sir, that they cannot doubt that you would care only for your people's good, were it made apparent.

JEZEBEL

Make it apparent.

JORAM

Sire, I would that the prince, my brother, might have had this task.

JEZEBEL

I, too, wish that, my son. Is not banishment enough, then? Do they ask for my death?

JORAM

Sir, those are their feelings.

AHAB

They hate my Queen and wish her gone?

JORAM

Sir, truth cannot be hidden from you.

AHAB

And if I ignore their feelings, or crush their mutterings?

JORAM

Sir, they think you too great a man, for either way.

AHAB

But if they err, and I do?

JORAM

You would not.

AHAB

If I did, what then?

JORAM

Your Majesty has too good a memory.

AHAB

What do you mean by that, boy?

JORAM

Sir, your father only came to the crown because a former King ignored men's feelings. King Nadab ignored his subjects' feelings. What happened to him? King Elah did. What happened to him? King Zimri did. What happened to him? Men now living saw all these Kings; and what came to them? The crown is granted on certain terms, according with the Life of this Race. My father, I beseech you, think what this Race asks.

AHAB

I never cease to think it. Leave us.

(*Exit* JORAM)

You heard what he said?

JEZEBEL

Yes.

AHAB

They want me to put you aside.

JEZEBEL

Yes, Ahab.

AHAB

What urged you to prosecute Naboth at such a time?

JEZEBEL

Someone had to act.

AHAB

You acted fatally.

JEZEBEL

I was myself, Ahab; a princess of Sidon; your Queen.

AHAB

This is not Sidon, but Shemer.

JEZEBEL

I will not plead for your forgiveness, then.
Dismiss me from your council and your court
And let me be; the hated foreign woman
Who tried and failed. I will be nothing here.
After these years of hatred it will be
Peace to be nothing. When my son returns,
(The captain, Ahaziah) send him hence.
I sent for him to help me govern here.
Since I am nothing now, he must not stay.
But now that I am nothing, I say this:

That you must be upon your guard, King Ahab.
More; you must play the King, and being King,
Strike down this prophet and his friend, Lord Jehu,
For they are linked together against peace.

AHAB

What proofs have you?

JEZEBEL

A woman has no proofs,
Only an instinct fortified by love
Stronger than any proof.

AHAB

And I have knowledge.
Jehu has been my captain of the horse,
My comrade in the field, my counsellor,
My soldier, who has shed his blood for me
In five campaigns, in many years of war.
This prophet is indeed the enemy
Of much that I have planned, but as for Jehu,
I know him, and I know that you have wronged him
And speak from bitterness.

JEZEBEL

Ahab, beware.
By all our lives together, you beware
Of Jehu and this man.

AHAB

Had I been ware of you, Queen Jezebel,
Many years sooner, I had had no need
To be aware of any of my subjects.
I cannot longer countenance your dealings.
They neither suit my people nor the time.
Therefore
I do dismiss you from your royalty,
From queenship and command and counselling,
From all authority in Shemer here.
This shall be straightway published as my will.

PROPHET

The messenger that spoke through me has gone,
And I am cold and broken as with blows,
But yet I hear—can you not hear—do you?

AHAB

What should we hear, old ruffian from the desert?

PROPHET

The wings descending and the footsteps coming.
The vultures and the dogs coming for blood.
Listen. The vultures settle in the court,
And there are footsteps coming up the stair,
The footsteps of the dogs that come for blood;
For blood is coming upon this house, and I
Have told you that it comes; I am its herald.

(*Enter* JEHU *from in front, carrying armour. He comes on, stands motionless, then flings down a helmet; then, after a pause, a corselet; then, after a pause, a sword.* ZAKKUR *stands behind him.*)

AHAB

What does your coming with these weapons mean?
Whose weapons are they? What has happened, Jehu?
Is it some challenge? Speak.

JEZEBEL

I know that sword.
It's Ahaziah's sword. My son is dead?

(JEHU *nods*)

AHAB

What? Ahaziah dead? How did he die?

JEHU

While he was riding here, he made a halt,
To rest his horses, at the inn at Springs;
And leaning on the lattice, looking out,
He fell out of the upper balcony,
And died soon after, broken by the fall.
Here is the witness, who will tell you how.

AHAB

Speak, then, and tell the tale. How could he fall?

ZAKKUR

By treachery, by Syrian treachery. Lord, when our Queen commanded the Prince to return here, she sent her orders by a Syrian of the court.

JEZEBEL

I did, by Malik.

ZAKKUR

Malik was in the pay of the King of Syria.

JEZEBEL

That is false. That lie has been exposed many times over.

ZAKKUR

Madam, alas, it is now proven, by Malik's confession.

AHAB

Who are you, who speak?

ZAKKUR

A lieutenant in our late Prince's troop, my lord.

AHAB

Go on, then, about Malik.

ZAKKUR

Before delivering his orders to our late Prince, he showed them to the Syrian officers in the garrison at Ramoth. They saw a chance of intercepting our Prince upon his way. They bribed Malik to lead the Prince, so as to halt at the inn at Springs. They did not wish to set upon him, because they expected the troop to be with the Prince. They sawed through the beams of the balcony of the inn, so that when he set foot upon it, the floor should give way. The Prince did not bring his troop with him, but set out with myself, his galloper, and Malik. He halted at the inn, at Malik's persuasion, much against

his will, for he wished to be here. Then all happened as his murderers the Syrians had devised. He went upon the balcony, it fell, and he died from it.

After he had died, my lord, Malik urged us to come away, which I and my colleague would not, without examination. When we found that the beams had been sawn, remembering Malik's Syrian birth and his suspicious wishes, first to halt there, then to come away, we taxed him with the crime and he confessed, and was secured.

The galloper waits at the inn for an escort for the body and the prisoner. It was decided that I should ride here at once with the news.

JEZEBEL

Before he died, did he say anything?

ZAKKUR

Yes, Madam; he muttered about the gods, and about you.

JEZEBEL

What did he say?

ZAKKUR

That we were to tell you that this was the gods' reward for peace with Syria.

JEZEBEL

Since he is dead, wisdom and peace are dead!

(*She goes out*)

AHAB

God, thou hast faced me with my sin this day.
My son, who was to follow me as King,
Killed by a Syrian plot, by treachery.
Killed, coming home to help me in my sorrows.

PROPHET

Killed by your treachery, that made the peace
With Syria, against God's ordinance.

JEHU

Nothing that has been done by Syria
Against this land, can rank beside this deed;
The loss of such a prince by such a crime
Will rouse this country, lord. You will keep peace
By your great policy, but through your people
A mighty cry for vengeance will arise.

AHAB

And not unheeded, Jehu. Listen, all.
This was his sword. He was to be the King
After my death, fulfilling all my dreams.
See, you, and you, and you, I take the sword
And draw it out and swear upon its hilt
To take a vengeance on the murderers
Who brought him to his death.

JEHU

Well sworn, O King!

PROPHET

Surely the Spirit of God is working in you!

AHAB

Wait yet, O Prophet; though my heart is sick
At having trusted in my enemies
And been ill-paid, I will ask help from God;
Counsel and help in any act of justice.
Go, gather me the prophets, let them seek
Illumination, then bring word to me
Whether the spirit do approve a war.
I will go seek for guidance, though my heart
Seeks less for guidance now than for release.

JEHU

Lord, all true hearts commiserate your grief.

AHAB

Thank you, good Jehu.

(*Exit* AHAB)

ZAKKUR

Well, he took the story.

JEHU

Yes, as I knew he would. The score's one each.
He has won Naboth, I have Ahaziah.

PROPHET

Was not the story true?

JEHU

The Prince is dead,
So much is true; and in an hour from now
We can be marching hence with Ahab's self,
If all your prophets will but prophesy.
I want him killed in war, outside the city.
Go, bid the prophets prophesy for war.

(*Exit* PROPHET, *with* ZAKKUR)

JEHU

So, Ahaziah, you were rude to me.
Princes should not be rude to rising men,
For men may rise. You will be rude no more.
I have been rude to you, my Ahaziah.
I kicked the lips that once were rude to me.
My foot is on your heart's blood, Ahaziah.

CURTAIN

Moon-Blossom

Full of years and wealth and evil, Menelaus
died in Sparta,
And Queen Helen at his bedside stood and
looked upon him dead,
He who once had bought her beauty, to be
bride for him, by barter,
He whom she had loathed and fled from,
now lay silenced on the bed.

Rose-Flower

Bitter thoughts were in her as she looked
upon his meanness,
Thoughts of Paris in his beauty when
their love was at its height,
Paris in his morning, and the King in his
uncleanness,
And this dead mean thing, her master, and
the winner of the fight.

Together

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering,
All was dark, save in the porch
The wind-blown fire of a torch,

And the sentries still as in a stound,
With their spear-heads drooped upon the ground.

ROSE-FLOWER

Then she thought: "These two men had me, and a myriad men have sickened
To a fever of a love for me who saw me passing by:
When they saw me, all their eyes grew bright, and all their pulses quickened,
And to win me or to keep me they went up to Troy to die.

MOON-BLOSSOM

"Now the earthly moon, my beauty, and the rose, my youth, have dwindled,
I am old, my hair is grey, and none remembers
What a fire in men's hearts Queen Helen kindled
Ere the fire in Queen Helen turned to embers."

TOGETHER

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the wind-blown torch-flame guttering,
And a moth that came
Beating with his wings about the flame,

And the sentries drawing breath,
With their spear-heads drooped saluting death.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Then she said: "The gods conspired to give gifts of beauty to me,
And the beauty gave the gift of death to all who came to woo me;
Now of all the men who loved me, none remain,
And of both the men who had me neither knew me—
Surely all my past was evil, for its fruit is bitter pain.

ROSE-FLOWER

"I will go to some lone island where I am not made a story,
Where my beauty made no widow, nor no orphan wanting bread;
Where no human sorrow suffers the disaster of my glory,
And my eyes may lose the vision of the hauntings of the dead.

MOON-BLOSSOM

"Day and night the dead men haunt me, whom the madness of my caring

Brought from home and wives and children to be bones upon the plain;
All the panther-like for beauty, all the lion-like for daring,
And they lie among the bindweed now, uncovered by the rain."

Together

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering;
All was dark, save in the porch
The wind-blown fire of a torch,
And the sentries still as in a stound
With their spear-heads drooped upon the ground.

Then she rose, and cloaked her face, and hurried swiftly from the city,
And to sea, away from Hellas, but she dared not show her face,
For the women and the orphans would have killed her without pity;
She had sown her crop of death too far; she found no resting-place.

But in inns where people gathered in the evenings after labour,
Where the shepherd's pipe or viol stirred the blind man to his verse,
Till the hearers swayed and trembled and the rough man touched his neighbour,

They would talk of Troy with sadness, but
of Helen with a curse.

MOON-BLOSSOM

After long years, when Helen was riding by
night
In storm, in the Ida forest, alone, not
knowing the road,
She saw a light in the blackness; she turned
to the light,
She came to the fort on the crag, the
panther-women's abode.

ROSE-FLOWER

Hearing her horse's stamp, they brought her
into the yard,
Those women fierce from the killing of lion
or boar or man;
They came with their torches round her,
they stared at her hard,
They knew her for Helen the Queen from
whom their sorrows began.

For years they had longed for her coming, to
have her to kill,
Her beauty a throat for their knives, her
body a prey—
Helen, who ruined their lovers, the root of
their ill—
She said: "I am Helen. Avenge your-
selves on me. You may."

Still they stared at her there in the torch-
light; then one of them said:
"God used you to bring things to be; evil
things to our city,
Evil things to yourself, for your face declares
you have paid;
You have come to the truth like ourselves;
we take not vengeance, but pity."
Then they welcomed her into their hold, and
when morning broke clear,
They rode with her down to the ruins of
what had been Troy;
There they left her alone in the wreck of the
thing over-dear
That the gods cannot grant to mankind,
but unite to destroy.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

FOURTH ACT

A KING'S DAUGHTER

FOURTH ACT

Jezebel

I shall not look upon my son again!
How many million mothers must have felt
As I, with a dead child. How many lives
Have been made lightless thus.
For no child ever dies without the breaking
Of someone's heart.
And yet the world goes on.
I shall go on, perhaps for many years,
And in my heart's most secret corridor
Will be a shrine, where I shall watch my son,
Lonely as Helen in her tower at Troy
When Paris had been killed.
Would I had been beside him when he fell,
And fallen with him to the pit of death!
Better die so, not mangled in the war,
A young man, beautiful in youth, as thou wert;
Not troubled yet by life; not yet a King;
Thou hast been only young and now art dead.

With all life's faults, I want you back in life,
Not dead, my son, beyond my touch and speech,
But here, moving and speaking, being mine.
My help and stay and wisdom and assuagement
As in the past. You, who gave no farewell,
Speak to me from the grave, O lovely son.

(*There is a sighing*)

Was that an answer from the dead, or birds
Flying away before the winter comes?
My son, if you are there, speak to my spirit.

(*There is a sighing*)

What message do you bring; that you are here,
What do you come to tell me?

THE VOICE

Death.

JEZEBEL

What?

THE VOICE

Death.

JEZEBEL

Whose death? Mine? Or your father's? Or the kingdom's?
My son's soul was within this room and speaking.

O speak again, say something, give me proof
That you are linked still by dear love to me.
Hark! Hush!
No. There was no voice speaking; nor will be.

(AHAZIAH *appears*)

My boy! My son!

AHAZIAH

Mother!

JEZEBEL

My child! My dear!

AHAZIAH

Listen. I cannot say it all. The flowers
Speak truth. You all are coming.

JEZEBEL

Then, beloved,
We shall soon meet again, and part no more.

AHAZIAH

Mother, I struggle back to tell you this:
It is most hard to come, most hard to speak.
You must with all your power strive to cut
These nets.

JEZEBEL

What are these nets?

AHAZIAH

The nets of death,
That are all round you like a hunter's toils.

JEZEBEL

Do you mean civil war? Or war with Syria?

AHAZIAH

That is not what I mean; but someone near you.
Someone about you has most deadly hands,
A hangman's hands; and you must break his hands.

JEZEBEL

Who is it, that is deadly? Is it Joram?

AHAZIAH

I cannot speak his name, but, mother, hark:
He murdered me; I never saw his face;
He killed me at the inn.

JEZEBEL

Jehu, you mean?

AHAZIAH

The man forever looking at the throat,
Whose fingers twitch; a red-eyed man it is,
I cannot speak the name.

JEZEBEL

O it is Jehu!
And Jehu murdered you?

AHAZIAH

There's danger, mother;
Avoid the nets. I cannot make you see them.

JEZEBEL

Jehu is spreading nets of treachery?

AHAZIAH

The flowers speak truth; the flowers and the rod,
The riding rod.

(*He goes*)

JEZEBEL

O speak! O my dear son,
How can I help, I being queen no longer,
But banished and condemned? What can I do?
And what is this of riding rods and flowers?

(*There is a sighing*)

My son is gone into the night of Death,
And Jehu murdered him in ways unknown.
Would I could prove the crime!

(*Enter* MICAIAH)

MICAIAH

Madam, a rider from the inn at Springs
Has brought these flowers, gathered by the prince
Your son, now dead.

JEZEBEL

The flowers that speak truth!
Was there no other relic but the flowers?

MICAIAH

Yes, Madam, this: a staff or riding rod,
Left on the flowers, so the rider said.

JEZEBEL

A riding rod! And do you know the rod?

MICAIAH

Madam, I do. It is Lord Jehu's staff.

JEZEBEL

What brought it to the inn at Springs,
Micaiah?

MICAIAH

I do not know. The rider found it there.

JEZEBEL

Where is the rider who delivered these?

MICAIAH

Gone, Madam; he preferred not to be known.

JEZEBEL

I see you have suspicions; let me know them.

MICAIAH

Madam, this staff was in Lord Jehu's hand
This morning, when I saw him here at court.

JEZEBEL

That, or one like it? Could you swear to
that?

MICAIAH

He held this staff. He stopped me in the
square
About a warrant, and I noticed it.
This little scratch is unmistakeable.

JEZEBEL

And what can you conclude from this, Micaiah?

MICAIAH

That the Lord Jehu hurried to the Springs,
After I saw him, and then hurried back.

JEZEBEL

What duty could have taken him to Springs?

MICAIAH

Madam, he had no duty there. I asked.

JEZEBEL

Might not a messenger have gone from him
Bearing his staff?

MICAIAH

Madam, he went himself.
The warden at the west gate saw him start
In that direction, and return from thence
Three hours later. He was back by noon.

JEZEBEL

So that he would have been at Springs, perhaps,
Before Prince Ahaziah halted there?

MICAIAH

Perhaps.

JEZEBEL

Yet not perhaps; he would have been there,
He must have been there at the very time.

MICAIAH

Madam, I dare not utter thoughts like these.

JEZEBEL

Yet Jehu could not know that he was coming
Home from the frontier, or would pass by
Springs.

MICAIAH

So please you, Madam, but the fact was
known
Publicly in the city everywhere.
The knowledge was abroad, I know not how.
You are beset by watchers, and by traitors.

JEZEBEL

And murderers and friends of murderers.
Jehu waylaid my son and murdered him.
By these poor relics sacred with his blood
I will denounce him to the King myself,
Or lay him dead before me with my hands.

(*She gathers the relics*)

MICAIAH

Lie there, sad relics of a glorious youth.

ZIKRI (*entering*)

Make ready for the utterance of the Prophet!

KALLAI

Bow down before the Prophet, bringer of truth!

(*Enter the* PROPHET)

PROPHET

I am bringer of Truth out of the hidden,
I am finder of ways where footing is sure,
I am sword and shield against things forbidden,
I am brightness to guide, healing to cure;
Mine are the words that endure.
I, now, about to declare as the Spirit orders,
Cry, let women avoid, let children hide,
Let none but spearmen be here, the city's warders.
I speak, out of the Truth, words that abide,
Men only may hear what might of men must decide.

(JEZEBEL *veils and goes. Enter* JORAM, *then* JEHU, *then* AHAB, *preceded by* SPEARMEN)

AHAB

Now that the revelation is vouchsafed,
Stand, all, before this Prophet, who has seen
Light in the darkness that has blinded us.

PROPHET

Hearken, O King, to revelation's self.
The spirit says, "Go up against the Syrians;
At Ramoth-Gilead you shall conquer them."
See here these horns of iron that I wear.
The spirit says, "With these horns shalt thou push
The Syrians, until they be consumed."

JEHU

Good messages, good omens, good foretellings

AHAB

May they prove good.

JORAM

The spirit filled the prophets with a glory
Marvellous to watch and hear: they spoke as one.

MICAIAH

Not quite as one, Prince Joram and my King.
One was not filled with spirit.

AHAB

Who is this?

MICAIAH

I am Micaiah, Lord, who have been counted
A seer, too, at times.

AHAB

O it is you!
Honest Micaiah, who must speak the truth.
I hate this man; he prophesies not good
But evil of me.

JEHU

These fellows are too ready with their evil.

PHARMAS (*To* MICAIAH)

See now, the prophets foretell victory,
With one mouth; say the same; cry victory.

MICAIAH

As the Lord lives I'll speak what the Lord says.

AHAB

Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead
To battle, or forbear?

MICAIAH

Go, Lord, and prosper,
The Lord shall make it yours.

AHAB

How many times
Shall I adjure you that you speak the truth
Speak nothing but the truth.

JORAM

I'd have a way to make him speak the truth.
Two troopers with a pair of stirrup leathers
To teach his obstinate jaw some reverence.

AHAB

Peace, Joram; let him speak.

MICAIAH

Sir, I will speak.
In dreams, last night, in the dark night, ere
cocks crowed,
I saw a downland empty to the sky.

JORAM

That is the way these fellows use to talk;
They'd talk another way, had I my will.

MICAIAH

And suddenly I saw all Israel
Scattered upon that downland frantically,
Like sheep without a shepherd. The Lord said:
"These have no master now; let them go home."

AHAB

And how do you interpret this your dream?

MICAIAH

That if you go this warfare, you, the master
Of Israel, will die.

AHAB

How die?

MICAIAH

I do not know.

JEHU

You mean, in battle?

MICAIAH

By violence.

JORAM

That means in battle, surely.

MICAIAH

Not necessarily.

JEHU

How else, then, man?

MICAIAH

I do not know. Perhaps by treachery.

JEHU

We will protect the King from treachery.

JORAM (*To* MICAIAH)

Except such treachery as men like you
Think in their hearts and utter in big words,
Trying to wreck the State.

AHAB

Did I not say
That he would utter evil about me?

JORAM

These fellows need a bit within their jaws.

MICAIAH

My prince, no bit can stop the telling truth.

PROPHET

What do you know of truth, idolater?

MICAIAH

Nothing. I know that certain things are true.

JEHU

Fine talk, to keep the army lingering.

AHAB

Have you some other vision to reveal?

MICAIAH

A sort of vision.

PROPHET

Ay, a sort of vision.
There is one way of vision, only one,
Vouchsafed to men, you false one, with false gods.

AHAB

What is this vision? Will it lighten me?

MICAIAH

It is of you and of the prophet tribe.

PROPHET

Some blasphemy. Take heed to what he says.

MICAIAH

In the dark night I saw this other thing:
I saw the Lord in heaven on his throne,
With all the host of heaven standing by him.
He said, "Who shall persuade King Ahab to go up
And die at Ramoth-Gilead?" They discussed it.
At last a spirit said, "I will persuade him."
The Lord said, "How?"
The spirit said, "I will go forth and be
A lying spirit in his prophet's mouths."
And the Lord said, "Thou shalt. Go forth and do so."
Behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit
Into thy prophets' mouths, and spoken evil
Not good to you.

PROPHET

You think God's truth has passed from me to you.
When did it pass, and how?

MICAIAH

You will know that
When you shall go into an inner chamber
To hide yourself.

AHAB

Carry this fellow to the Governor,
And have him into prison in the dark,
And let his bread and drink be bitterness
Until I come in peace.

MICAIAH

If you return at all
In peace, the spirit has not spoken by me.
Hearken, O people, everyone of you.

AHAB

Have him away.

MICAIAH

Which story is the likelier to be true,
Mine, which when told brings prison, or this fellow's
Which earns the King's reward? The truth is dangerous.

JORAM

You'll find this dangerous. Away with him!

(*He is dragged out.*)

JEHU

That shows how close your enemies can
come.
Even to your very court.

JORAM

He should be silenced.

AHAB

He is a gallant fellow, without judgment.
But he presumes too much, he and his
dreams.

PROPHET (*Crying aloud*)

O King, a vision is vouchsafed to me!
I see! I see! Hearken to what I see.
I see a red bull trampling down God's foes;
He neezes fire and all his fell is fire;
His shoulder is a mountain rough with forest;
His eye the wrath of God; he stamps the
cities.
Go up against the Syrians, like this bull.

JORAM

There is the voice of God.

JEHU

Ay, truly, Prince.

AHAB

Since God declares that we should make this war,
Which we, as men, have shrunk from hitherto,
Although provoked by countless insolence,
Now hearken to the utterance of the crown.

(*Enter* JEZEBEL)

JEZEBEL

Ay, hearken to the utterance of the crown.
You are all come to hear a war declared.
Now I, the crown, declare it unto you.
I declare war upon our enemies.
They are all present, standing in this place,
Waiting the execution of our sword.

(*To Prophet*)

This man, the madman from the desert, first,
Who rages like a desert-storm, that kills
With sand, burning hot sand, pitiless sand.

(*To Joram*)

This next, the hater of his house, our son,
Who, for a wound that pains him would be glad
That thousand others should be sick with wounds.

(*To Jehu*)

Then, next, this other man, not mad, not sick,
Not even suspected; honoured, trusted, loved.
This man, the rider to the inn at Springs,
For secret evil. Hark! This man, King Ahab,
Murdered our son and plots to murder you.
Seize him, King Ahab, ere it be too late.

AHAB

Murdered our son? But this is childishness.

JEZEBEL

No, I bring proof; the rod, the rod he holds,
Was found at Springs, to prove that he was there.

JEHU

This rod, good Madam?

JEZEBEL

Even that very rod.

AHAB

Who found it at the Springs? Who brought it here?

JEZEBEL

A rider, lord, who gave it to Micaiah.

JORAM

What rider?

AHAB

Yes, what rider, can you tell?

JEZEBEL

One who would not be known, Micaiah said.

AHAB

Micaiah! He?

JORAM

The man imprisoned here.

JEHU

My lord, I grieve less at this ill suspicion
Than at the sad disaster which has caused it.

JEZEBEL

You killed my son most foully at the inn;
You were seen riding thither before noon,
And left your rod there while you did the deed,

Upon these flowers which my son had gathered;
These desert flowers.

JEHU

My lord and King, I can most clearly prove
That I was at my quarters all the morning.
This rod I missed this morning from my quarters
And found it here on entering but now.
Prince Joram saw me find it as I entered.

JORAM

That is most true; I did.
Mother, you should not be here; come away.

JEZEBEL

My Lord, my King, my husband, listen to me.
You know me, whether I am mad or no.
I am not mad; but Ahaziah's spirit
Came to me here, stood where his murderer stands,
Less than an hour ago, denouncing him,
His murderer, and traitor to yourself.
I, knowing this, see to the soul of things,
And cry, if you be man, attack this traitor,
Tear out his wicked plottings and destroy him.

AHAB

Let the Queen's women come. I hear your charges
Brought with more passion than with evidence.
These are our friends, our proven soldier, Jehu,
Our son, and this, the prophet of the spirit,
Not what you think. See, here your women come.
Tend the Queen's majesty to her apartments.

JEZEBEL

You think me mad, my inmost wisdom, mad.
For the last time, for Ahaziah's sake,
For your sake, for the kingdom, for the crown,
And for the sake of God who gives the crown,
Believe what I have said against this Jehu.

AHAB

I grieve that anyone should bring such charges.
That you should bring them is an anguish to me.
Go with your women hence, and try to rest.

JEZEBEL

Prince Joram, will you give me your support?
Thank you, my son.
Since no one will believe,
I, here, the Queen, must act alone. I will.

(*She snatches* JORAM'S *knife and tries to kill*
JEHU)

Die, murderer of my son!

JORAM (*Catching her*)

I thought you'd try it.
But I was ready for you. Come now, mother,
You must go rest. Come help her there, you women.

(JEZEBEL *is helped off*)

It is my brother's death that makes her thus.

AHAB

It shakes us all. You understand, Duke Jehu,
The cause of this, without my saying more.

JEHU

My lord, I understand.
But yet suggest some trial or enquiry
Into my dealings.

AHAB

Do not think of it.
For these unhappy things which bruise men's hearts
Tear women's hearts across. Let us proceed.
I declare war against the Syrians
For breach of treaty. We will march at once.

JORAM

Though wounded, I will march, for I'll repay
The Syrians what I owe. Come, prophet, spread
The news throughout the city.

PROPHET

I will declare God's wrath against His enemies.

(JORAM *and* PROPHET *go*)

AHAB

Stay, Jehu, yet. You heard Micaiah's dream.
That was an evil omen for our war.

JEHU

I do not think so. Why, what was the dream?
That there should seem to be no King to-day.
Was not that it? The meaning is apparent:
That you should wear disguise.

AHAB

Ha! Well suggested.

JEHU

It is a wise precaution at the least.
Some traitor may be plotting to destroy you,
Some Syrian assassin may be here.
So take Micaiah's hint and wear no purple.

AHAB

A good interpretation. I accept it
So. I will march disguised.

JEHU

Much better so.

AHAB

Micaiah did interpret for my death.

JEHU

These thinkers are the enemies of war
Because they are afraid. He wished to scare you.
Let me unclasp the buckle of your cloak.
Much wiser give no target to these archers;
Wear the plain armour of a charioteer.

AHAB

I will, Duke Jehu. Lie you there, my purple,
Till I return to-night, with victory.

At sunset every night the Queen and I
Go through the citron gardens to the kennels,
To feed our Hittite wolf-hounds with raw flesh.
To-night when we go feed them, we will go
As conquerors of Syria, through the city.

(*Exit* AHAB)

JEHU

Right, my good Lord. Yes, you shall be disguised;
But this bright bird within the quiver here
Will pierce through your disguise before to-night,
And you shall feed the wolf-hounds, never fear;
So shall your Queen, with royal flesh and raw.

(*He puts on the King's purple*)

Oh, out in the desert, my spear and my bow
Will win me whatever I need;
The wine and the oil that another did grow
And the horse that another did breed.
So away for the desert. . . .

Ay, I have trotted in your bodyguard
Too long, by God!

CURTAIN

Rose-Flower

Queen Helen left those women of the wood,
She clambered from her horse and stood again
Even on the very hill where Troy had stood,
Where tamarisk shrubs and broom-sprigs and wild grain
Sprouted from bronze and rib-bones of men slain.

There was the palace where her love had been;
Stones blackened by the fire and misplace't
By roots of vines that fed upon the paste
Of all the pride where she had lived a queen.

Troy was no more than weeds and fire-flaked stone,
But still the straits ran roaring to the south,
And still the never quiet winds were blown
With scent of meadow-sweet from Simois' mouth.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Yet now no Greeks were moving on the beaches,
No galleys of the Greeks came oaring in,
Nor did lancer scouts or parties ride the whin,
Bringing in or checking convoys from the river's upper reaches
Where the forest pines begin.

And the forges were all gone, and all the fires
Of the camps and burnings of the dead;
And the grinding of the bronze-shod chariot-tyres
Rang no more.
Both in city and on shore
There were no more shouted orders, clash of arms or marchers' tread.

ROSE-FLOWER

All was manless now, uncared for; both the streams had left their courses,
There was marsh where corn had grown of old; and there, where Paris lay,
Was an apple tree with fruit which fed the now wild Trojan horses,
That with bright teeth bit each other;
Earth made Greek and Trojan brother,
All the passion that had raged there now was dead and gone away.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Then she cried, "I caused the quarrel that
brought death along these beaches,
I alone made Troy this ruin, I alone, from
haste of youth,
From a woman's bent, that listens to a lie, if
it beseeches;
Now I stand here old and friendless, hav-
ing nothing but the truth."

ROSE-FLOWER

There she stopped, for there before her, in
the ruins, stood a stranger;
"This is changed indeed," he told her,
"since I stood here once before:
Then it flamed all red to heaven and it rang
with death and danger,
And I stood here with noble Agamem-
non
In the thunder of the ending of the war."

MOON-BLOSSOM

Something in the old man's bearing made her
start and catch her breath.
"You are Nireus, friend," she answered.
"You are he who brought me here
When my life and love were dear:
Then I came to life and loving, now I come
to grief and death.

"There is no small grass, in plain or water,
But grows from the body of one killed
By the deadly love of me, who am Helen,
Leda's daughter:
All the young and swift and lovely, all the
quick of heart are stilled;
I was cause of their going to the slaughter.

"Daylong and nightlong their shadows pursue me with evil,
Haunting my thought in the day, killing
my rest in the night;
Now they have drawn me here; their multitudinous devil
Bids me die where I sinned.
I hear their cry in the wind,
I see their eyes in the light."

ROSE-FLOWER

Nireus answered, "Ah, not thus, not so,
Queen Helen, surely,
Are those who died for love of you, to win
you or to keep!
If they gave their lives, they gave them, as
a man gives frankly, purely,
Without question, comment or complaint,
The strong heart equal with the faint,
All content to see your beauty and to
tread hard ways to sleep.

"Now they know that your beauty made
them splendid,
Splendid to the death; for I have seen,
Seen and talked, beloved Helen, with the
souls of those who ended
In the ruins of this city that has been.
And they praise your name, they count
you still their Queen.

"Now come with me, for the ship waits to
receive you,
The wind is fair for Symé; let us start.
Here, where long ago I lost you, I retrieve
you;
Let us leave this town of broken heart
For the peace of Symé harbour and the
mirth of Symé mart,
And the calm of knowing sorrow at an
end
And the quiet of the memory of a
friend."

TOGETHER

Then they sailed for Symé Island, and the
gods were with their going,
For their beauty came upon them both,
with youth and strength and peace;
Now they rule and live forever in a spring
forever blowing,
High in Symé where the sun is bright and
skylarks never cease.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

FIFTH ACT

FIFTH ACT

ROSE-FLOWER

There is no rider, coming from the army,
In sight yet, Madam. Shall we play again?

(*No answer*)

MOON-BLOSSOM

Come to the window. There. What white
was that?

ROSE-FLOWER

The wind lifting the dust.

MOON-BLOSSOM

No. Yes, it was.
Dust from a windflaw blowing down the glen.
There is no rider, Madam. Shall we sing?

(*No answer*)

ROSE-FLOWER

She is too stunned with sorrow to give orders.
Shall we not sing, to soothe her?

MOON-BLOSSOM

Sing, then, you.

ROSE-FLOWER

Speak to her first.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Madam——

ROSE-FLOWER

She will not answer;
So speak some quiet thing.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Men are like wind-vanes that forever swing;
Men are like winds forever wavering;
Men are like water; men are like the tide;
Women, the rock they ebb from, do abide.

ROSE-FLOWER

She will not speak. See, it is sunset now,
And now the drums begin upon the house-tops
And all the plain spreads out, burningly clear.

JEZEBEL

What is that noise of evil that I hear?

ROSE-FLOWER

The prophet speaking in the market-place.

MOON-BLOSSOM

All afternoon his voice has shouted evil.

JEZEBEL

It is as red as blood within this room.
They have gone out to war; is it not so?
I have been thinking till it all seems plain.
We are amusements only
In mightier life than ours.
God knows, we are not amusement to ourselves.
I am no Queen. I have no son; no husband;
No task, no place, and yet I covet news.
Look, by the rocks, beyond the spur; you see?

ROSE-FLOWER

A rider.

MOON-BLOSSOM

In a white cloak, with a lance.

ROSE-FLOWER

One of King Ahab's lancers, if in white.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Surely a rider from the army, Madam.

ROSE-FLOWER

Bringing good news, because he would not gallop
Save with the news of triumph.

JEZEBEL

What he brings
Will not be what we look for, because life
Is unexpected, whether good or ill.
And at the door by which a horror enters
Another comes, a muffled one, a silent.

(*There is a knocking*)

Enter, without there!

(PHARMAS *enters*)

Yes? What is it, Pharmas?

PHARMAS

The Presence will forgive my interruption.
There is a woman in the outer court
Asks that you grant her audience for a moment.

JEZEBEL

Why should I grant her audience? Who is she?

PHARMAS

She comes from Lower Egypt, as she says.

JEZEBEL

What is her traffic with me?

PHARMAS

Madam, this.
She brings cosmetics and Arabian gums.

JEZEBEL

This is no time for such. I cannot see her.

PHARMAS

May the great Presence pardon if I speak.
I told her that you would not buy her gear
At such a time, but she implored me still
To beg you to admit her to your presence.

JEZEBEL

Did she say why?

PHARMAS

Yes, Madam; because once
Many long years ago she lived in Sidon,
Her father being sutler to the guard,
Your royal father's bodyguardsmen, Madam.
She says she looked upon your presence there,
When you were a princess. She does desire
To see that prophecy of future beauty
Fulfilled in you the Queen, if you the Queen
Would graciously permit her eyes to feast
Upon the sight of you.

JEZEBEL

So our pasts come
To see what time had made of us. So be it.
A word of Sidon would be beauty to me,
To-day. Let her come in.

PHARMAS

I will, O Splendour!

(*Exit*)

ROSE-FLOWER

Queen, it is wise to let a stranger come?

JEZEBEL

No.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Then why see her?

ROSE-FLOWER

Would it not be better
If, first, we questioned her?

MOON-BLOSSOM

Or searched for weapons?

ROSE-FLOWER

She well might carry daggers.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Or bring poison.

JEZEBEL

No; let her come. I am involved in nets
So close, that both the wise thing and unwise
Are cords to catch me.

ROSE-FLOWER

She is here.

PHARMAS (*Entering with* HAMUTAL)

Thus way.
Stand here until the Presence speaks to you.

(*Exit*)

JEZEBEL

They tell me that you lived in Sidon once.

HAMUTAL

Yes, lady, yes. I passed my childhood there.

JEZEBEL

So. In which street or quarter was your home?

HAMUTAL

The twisted stinking quarter of the poor,
One where you never trod, near the fish-market.

JEZEBEL

I trod there often, and its filthiest lane,
Silvered with cat-gnawn droppings of the nets,
Was blessed to me. It is blest in memory.

HAMUTAL

Perhaps to others it is not so blest.
I know my father starved there; so did I.
That's past. The question now is, Is the man
Gone from the door?

JEZEBEL

The man who brought you here?
Look.

ROSE-FLOWER (*Looking*)

He has gone.

JEZEBEL

Why should he not be gone?

HAMUTAL

They are all spies here, every man of them.
And I have come here, Madam, to say this:
You are in instant danger of your life.

JEZEBEL

From whom?

HAMUTAL

I cannot say. I will not say.
I do not rightly know; but they are wicked;
Wicked and bold. Though others made them so.
I have come here to help you to escape.

JEZEBEL

I thank you for the thought, but first convince me
That there is danger.
I have lived here in danger twenty years.
What horror comes to-day?

HAMUTAL

Come to the window, Madam; but be hidden.
Look there. You see the side gate of the palace?
You see, behind the ruined wall, armed men?
They watch that side gate lest you leave the palace.
Now, on this side, see there, among those bushes
More men-at-arms, watching the royal gate.
There at the water-gate are more armed men,
And they are not your guards.

JEZEBEL

I see they are not.
Then, while they watch for me, their friends are watching
My husband in the army? It is so?

HAMUTAL

No, do not ask me, Madam; I know nothing.

ROSE-FLOWER

How could our Queen escape with the gates watched?
This is some treason, Madam, to betray you
Out of the palace, into savage hands.

JEZEBEL

Let's see her face. Ah! no, she is not that.
Look, woman; many Queens have been betrayed
Since men were ruled; betrayed to death and shame
Most foully, by their subjects, whom they trusted.
There is no treachery on earth more devilish
To brand men blacker or to rake the heart worse.
You would not be the one to tempt me forth
To death and shame among my enemies?

HAMUTAL

Madam, I swear I would not.

MOON-BLOSSOM

We could call
The palace guards.

ROSE-FLOWER

Yes, call the palace guards and question her.

HAMUTAL

Come to the doorway, Madam.
You hear the sounds below? Your palace guards

Are being feasted by your enemies;
Women and drink have overcome your guards.

ROSE-FLOWER

Then how can she escape?

HAMUTAL

The little door—
The little, secret, unsuspected door
Under the stair, leads to a passage way,
Straight to the stables. I have brought the keys.

JEZEBEL

You are my steward's wife, then? No one else
Could know about the door.

HAMUTAL

Oh, hurry, hurry!
What matter who I am? You are the Queen.
You will find horses ready in the stables
For you and for your women. From the stables
You can escape, the postern is unlockt.

JEZEBEL

And you?
What kind of life awaits you, after this?

HAMUTAL

A better kind of life than you have made
For poor folk.

JEZEBEL

Ah! fine words; but ten years hence,
Nay, two years, one year, hence, you will remember
My queenship as a dream, a golden dream.

ROSE-FLOWER

O Madam, take the keys; do not delay.

MOON-BLOSSOM

The men outside are beating at the gate.

ROSE-FLOWER

Look, Madam, they have scrambled from the bushes
And beat upon the bars.

HAMUTAL

O Heaven! Hark!

JEZEBEL

What is it?

HAMUTAL

Listen! Listen!
Come from the door.

ROSE-FLOWER

What did you think you heard?

HAMUTAL

Come nearer me.

JEZEBEL

I am not terrified.
Draw a deep breath and tell us what it is.

HAMUTAL

I think that someone is outside the door,
Listening to what we say.

JEZEBEL

Be still a moment.

HAMUTAL

It is a man.

ROSE-FLOWER

There is a noise of armour.

MOON-BLOSSOM

Someone is breathing deeply just outside.

HAMUTAL

What shall I do, what shall I do? O Heaven!

JEZEBEL

Help her to veil. Treat her as one of you;
Cover her features with the gossamer.
Now let her hurry to the passage yonder.

(*Exit* HAMUTAL)

We will be ridded of uncertainty.
Is anyone behind the door there? Enter.

(*She goes back and flings open the door.* PASHUR *is there. He comes in*)

Who are you, fellow? And what brings you here?

PASHUR

A messenger, with news. And who are you?

ROSE-FLOWER

She is your Queen, so speak with reverence.

PASHUR

A Queen! God spare us; soldiers own no Queen.
But you shall hear my story, Queen or no.

ROSE-FLOWER

Is the King dead? Speak! Is King Ahab dead?

PASHUR

Learn to respect a royal messenger.
Ay, it has been a hot day's work to-day.

JEZEBEL

If you be from the King, tell us your story.

PASHUR

Ay, I am from the King. That is God's truth.
And I have ridden out, and fought, and ridden
Back to this city, and the whole world sways
As from the falling shoulders of a horse.

ROSE-FLOWER

So the King lives! Thank God.

PASHUR

Yes, the King lives.
And give God praise, because of victory.

JEZEBEL

I give God praise.

PASHUR

Queen, it has been a day.
Think for a moment what this day has been.
We marched this morning with our banners waving,

With the prophets raving, and the trumpets blowing,
With the charioteers of the King of Judah,
And the spears of the King, a thousand men.
We came to Ramoth when they least expected,
While they slept the noontide and thought it peace.
There we paid back upon the Syrians
A little of what we owed, by God.

JEZEBEL

You mean, they did not know that there was war?

PASHUR

They knew it well enough before we ended.
You see these blackened ashes mixed with blood,
That is what Ramoth and her people are.
The King gave order you should see the work.
You see, ashes and blood; by God, I love them.
But that is not the message that I bring.
I bring a message about good King Ahab,
Who rode into the battle in his chariot
Against the chariots of Syria.
Keep yourself quiet, Syrians, while I tell.
There was a man, who shall be nameless,

Who shall be blameless, or praised aloud,
He with an arrow shot King Ahab
Beneath the arm in the armour joint.

JEZEBEL

He was behind the King, then, when he shot.

PASHUR

He wished his work to be successful, lady.

JEZEBEL

So the King died?

PASHUR

The Queen knows everything.
He did not die at once, but bled to death,
Down in the shadow of the willow trees.
His blood dripped from his chariot; the dogs licked it,
Even as the Teshbon prophet did foretell.

ROSE-FLOWER

Let us mourn for the King, for the cedar fallen,
For the eagle fallen from heaven, for the burnt-out fire.

MOON-BLOSSOM

For the light that shone and is dark, for the word spoken,
For the strength unknit, for the crown brought to the mire.

JEZEBEL

My King is dead! I knew that he was dead.
Have you declared this news to any yet?

PASHUR

Not yet.

JEZEBEL

Then go; declare it to the priests,
That they may now declare it to the people:
The King is dead and now his son is King;
King Joram is the King in Israel.

PASHUR

You are too quick. Joram is not the King.
Jehu, anointed by the Prophet's oil,
Has killed your Joram with an arrow shot
Under his arm, and out right through his heart,
Killing him in his chariot as he drove.
And he has killed his ally, and has flung

Your Joram's body, bloody as it is,
Down into Naboth's vineyard, to the dogs.
Now Bidkar, captain of the charioteers,
Drives the good Jehu hither to be crowned.
Jehu is King, and you, you scarlet whore,
Abominable in the face of God,
You manless, soulless, crownless foreigner,
Shall taste the wrath of God and of God's people.
Now for your spicery there shall be stink,
And where the delicate hair has known the comb
There shall be baldness, and where silk has lain
There shall be nakedness.
And where the red lips mocked God delicately
There shall be broken teeth biting on dust:
It shall be done to you ere this day passes.

(*Exit* PASHUR)

JEZEBEL

My King, my sons, are killed! So Jehu wins.
Thus in an hour the world slips from the feet.
What change beyond this world summons us home?
What conclave of the spirits?
Dead: all three.
Bring me my jewels from the tiring-room.

(*The* MAIDS *go, then return with casket*)

You women, who were with me from the first,
Jehu is coming here to murder me.
He will be here in some few minutes now.
Yet there may still be time for you to go.

ROSE-FLOWER

And time for you, O Queen; you could fly too.
Put on these veils. Oh, hurry! We will take
The door the woman told of, and the horses,
And be in safety on the coast by dawn.

JEZEBEL

I am the daughter of a Queen, my friends.
My life has been here and my death shall be
Near to my dead. But one task more, my friends.
Swift, from within, my cases of cosmetics,
My crownets and the settings for my hair,
The purple chlamys with the spangs of gold
That long ago my father won at Rhodes;
The robe that once the great Queen Helen had
When she was beauty's self, and gave her beauty
To buy a little love in windy Troy.

(*The* MAIDS *bring the gear*)

That is the last task you shall do for me.

(*Gives jewels*)

And this the last least gift that I can give,
With all my thanks for service you have done me,
Year in, year out, for many bitter years.
I think no Queen has ever been so served.
Courage. Here is the key; draw your veils close.

ROSE-FLOWER

O mistress, come with us!

MOON-BLOSSOM

Beloved mistress!
What will they do to us, what will they do?

JEZEBEL

Nothing. They will not find you. You will go
Down through the secret door and so away.
Master your tears. You, take her by the arm.
You will be sailing up the coast to Sidon
By sunrise; think.

MOON-BLOSSOM

And where will you be, lady?

JEZEBEL

As it is written for me.

(*To* ROSE-FLOWER)

Sister. Friend.
When you reach Sidon, greet the King, my father,
And give him this, and bid him consecrate
A stone for me. Now go. The gods go with you.

(*The* MAIDENS *go*)

I will prepare myself for burial,
Since but a little time remains to me.
There is the dust of Jehu's charioting;
The two Assyrian stallions which we gave him
Coming to end my House.
But first, those women.
Hush! All is still. They must have reached the stable.
That woman spoke the truth, the way was clear.
There is no noise of men arresting them.
The guards are still. Thus far they must be safe.

There is no sound; and see, those men are quiet.
O gods, send messengers to make them safe!
Ay, there they go, on horseback. They are free.

Now let me pray. "O thou great fire of life,
Of whom all lives of men are but the sparks,
Take back this spark into the fire that burns
In the great sun, in all the lesser suns,
In the suns' moons, and everything that lives
In wild blood, and the pushing of the spring;
And if my ways were darkness, give me darkness,
And if my ways were brightness, give me light."
Now I will decorate myself for death,
As once before, when I was crowned a bride
Here to the King.
First, with this pencil, I
Darken my brows, because they go to death.
And make my eyes bright, since I join my husband
And go again to look upon my sons.
Next I will set this scarlet on my lips,
And on my cheek, lest men should think me pale
And say that I, the Queen, am pale from fear.
Now I will draw Queen Helen's robe about me.

This golden bird is Helen's very hair
That Paris kissed in Troy, my father told me.
Lastly, I will make consecrate my hair
With royal gold, for I will die a Queen.

Now am I as the beauty that I was,
When in my father's palace near the sea
The princes of the Islands came to court me,
Phorbas, and Kreon, and Andemakos,
Kings of the Islands, bright-eyed from the sea,
Men who had gone as strangers to strange lands
And there made friends by something kindling in them:
Not like this Queen whom once they courted there.
Where are they now, those men who loved me once?
Perhaps alive still in their island homes,
Decked with the precious things of half the world,
And thinking of me sometimes, as men do
Think of old loves long over utterly.
And Tsor of Mura, whom I might have married,
Had I been wise. He will still think of me.
Now will I bare my throat that they may kill me.
How the blood beats that soon will cease to beat,

Poor servant blood, that kept this flesh alive
Knowing not why, and now shall serve no more
This captive soul that was an earthly Queen.
And I without this servant shall not know
The hour of pain, the sleepless night, the day
Anxious as fever with this troublous world;
Shall know, it may be, nothing more forever,
Or know, it may be, all things burningly,
Know god the spirit as a lover would.
Now I will look if those who come to kill
Are on their way.

(*Goes to window*)

O prison of a city
Which I have hated! Little evil lanes,
Filthy with dogs and lepers and blind men
Made eyeless by the flies. O nest of vipers,
Within few moments I shall pass from you.
Once an Egyptian told me that at death
The soul has power to will its resting-place:
So do I will that I be far from here,
At Sidon on a hilltop near the sea,
Looking at Kittim at a sun-setting,
When all the peaks rise up like crowns of gods
And flame with the gods' thoughts. And past those peaks,
Beyond, in the imagined, never seen,
Behind its reef of rocks, and beautiful

With marble and with wonders and with waters,
Is Mura, where my lover was a King.

But hark, they come. I would go forth to Sidon,
To Sidon, or to Kittim, or to Mura,
Some place of the sea-princes near the sea.
I would forth to Sidon, or to Mura,
To Mura, or to Sidon, or to Kittim—

(*She sings*)

The April moon is in the sky,
Last night I heard the wild geese cry.

Oh ho!

The brooks are bright on Lebanon,
The rain has come, the snows are gone,

Oh ho!

The north wind faints and soon the south
Will blow the spice smell in the mouth,

Oh ho!

Then shall my bird the ship take wing
And sail the green seas with the King,
And find, maybe, a finer thing
Than any here.

Oh ho!

(*Enter* PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL)

PHARMAS

Madam, King Jehu and his men are come:
They ask to see you at the window yonder.

JEHU (*Outside*)

Come out, you Jezebel, and taste God's judgment,
So that this land which you have wrecked may find
Some little peace!

JEZEBEL

Had Zimri peace,
Who killed his master?

JEHU

Let me see this whore!

(*He clambers up to look in*)

And who is with her.

(*Speaks to* PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL)

Who is on my side?
Who of you men within are for King Jehu?

PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL

We are, great King!

JEHU

Then throw her down to me,
Seize her and throw her down!

ASHOBAL *and* PHARMAS (*Together*)

(*Throw her down*)

Down with you, Mistress!

JEHU

Get up, you horses. Would you shrink from flesh?
Tread her; come up, you; over her; once more.
Tread her again. I'll teach you who is master.
Ride over her, you fellows, every one.
Ride over her and trample on her body;
Let the beasts kick her. That's the way. Again.
You tread the harlot who has wrecked this land.
Come here and hold my horses, one of you.
Give me a hand, you men, and let me in.

(*Enter* JEHU, *by the window*)

That's made an end of her, the filthy witch!

PHARMAS

I stabbed her with a knife before I threw her.

JEHU

You, did you? Well, then fetch me wine
to drink,
In the King's cup, by God. So. Give it here.

(*Drinks*)

I needed drink after this day of fighting.
A hot day's work, but by the living God,
To-morrow shall be hotter. Ahab's sons,
And Ahab's friends, and Ahab's ministers
Shall have their heads in baskets by to-
morrow.
Where is this man who says he killed the
Queen?

PHARMAS

Here, mighty King.

JEHU

Go, find the cursed hag
And bury up her carrion in the earth,
For after all she was a King's daughter.

(*Exit* PHARMAS)

JEHU (*Sings*)

O out in the desert my bow and my spear,
Shall win me whatever I need,
Another man's tent, and another man's gear,
And another man's . . .

Fill me more wine. Go to the window yonder.
Halt. As you were. I'll go myself. You, fellow.
You fellow, there. Is the Queen's body there?
What does he say?

ASHOBAL

He says that the wild dogs have torn the body.

JEHU

Good enough end and fitting burial for her!
Now I have sacrifice to do to Baal.
By God, a lusty sacrifice! By God,
These damned idolaters shall learn the truth!
None of your knives on me.

(*Goes out*)

(*The* SERVANTS *and* MEN *go out*)

(*Enter* MICAIAH *from in front*)

MICAIAH

She was too good a woman to be Queen
In such a land as this, at such a time.
Would she had gone! Her women have escaped.
And I am freed from prison by the rabble.

Wisdom is gone from the city,
The killer alone is obeyed,
A man without law, without pity,
Who was fed by the King he betrayed.
The debt that was owing is paid,
By a new deed of murder that cries
To the gods who are Kings in the skies.
Though the ways of the gods are most wise,
They are dark, they make me afraid.

CURTAIN

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